EXPONENTIAL LISTENING

Harness the power of listening to change the way we work and live.

R

INTRODUCTION

What Is Exponential Listening?

Everything begins with listening. Exponential listening happens when the practice of listening challenges our assumptions to the point of creating significant change in the way we work; and the way we think. *Exponential Listening* is a toolkit based on an award-winning framework, and follows a simple four-step process:

QUESTION > LISTEN > REFLECT > LEARN.

Why Should I Use *Exponential Listening?*

Exponential Listening is designed for people who are looking to gain a deep understanding of the needs of the communities they serve in order to evolve their offerings; or who are planning to enter new communities to expand their business and reach. Rather than starting with solutions, our framework challenges entrepreneurs and innovators to listen to the people they aim to serve, first.

What Should I Expect?

Throughout the *Exponential Listening* toolkit, you will be challenged to engage in real conversations with community members. This toolkit includes a series of activities and prompts across four sections: Question, Listen, Reflect, and Learn.

"We must design the conditions where the constituents own the change we're asking them to make because… when new ideas are created and decisions are made without the oversight of end-users, adoption of new behaviors will always be low… *[Exponential Listening]* is a great example of a project that's built ownership transfer into the engagement."

George Aye, Design Observer on the first edition of *Exponential Listening*, "AHA Is Listening."

Let's Begin

Materials Required:
Pen, Paper, Recording device (a camera or smartphone with audio/video recording capabilities will suffice. Additional examples provided in the toolkit)

Participants:
In addition to your core team, community members and stakeholders of interest will need to be recruited to complete some of the exercises (workshops, surveys, and interviews). While possible to complete alone, it is recommended to work with a team of 3-5.

When building your working group and core team, please proceed with caution, and ask yourself the following:

- Is the team I am on representative of the community the work is focusing on?

- Does my team include BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color)

- Do I have a point of contact to best introduce my team and I to the community?
  - *Is this point of contact a member of said community?*

QUESTION

Every great study starts with great questions. This phase of the methodology gets any team off to the right start with 4 crucial questions. Prior to listening, research preparation will help you focus your efforts, select appropriate methods to apply, and gain useful results. The following questions[1] and tips should be used to guide any new study:

1. What do you want to learn? Select 5-7 research questions for your study (e.g. "What barriers affect health in rural towns?"). Note that these are the internal questions you wish to answer and not the ones you'll be asking people.

2. Whom do you plan to learn about? Consider primary characteristics that best describe your target participants. Think also about the types of behaviors you wish to understand.

3. How do you plan to use what you learn? Create goals for any study that explain how insights may guide decisions. Imagine how the results might impact your own practices.

4. Why do you want to learn? Take stock of what has led you to take this project on in the first place. Acknowledge and question your personal bias and agenda.

1. What do you want to learn?

_____

_____

_____

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2. Whom do you plan to learn about?

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3. How do you plan to use what you learn?

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4. Why do you want to learn?

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[1]These questions have been adopted from, and inspired by, Tomer Sharon's book, *Our Research: Attaining Stakeholder Buy-In for User Experience Research Projects*, 2012.

As you develop your research plan (on the previous page), consider the specific problem or opportunity area you are hoping to learn more about. What task or experience, in particular, is your project aiming to improve (if there is an assumption something is not working) or scale (if there is an assumption something is already working well) with the end user? Summarize that in the space below:

_____

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_____

TIP   As you finalize your research plan for the project, consider your own background, and/or the profile of your team. Are you, or your team representative of members of the community you are hoping to serve? If not, begin by developing a strategy for recruiting team members (even an advisory council!) that are. In doing so, you have a much stronger chance of developing new solutions or scaling existing ones in a manner that will be relevant and ethical. Remember, your own preferences are not the default solution.

LISTEN

The best way to learn from others is by listening to them. The trick is being able to hear what you need to learn for the purpose of the study. In this section, you'll begin uncovering answers to your questions across three phases of listening: *Situate*, *Explore*, and *Evaluate*. Each phase serves a unique purpose for you to gain a holistic understanding of the community you are working with.

- **Situate:** To gain necessary understanding of existing circumstances.
- **Explore:** To explore issues of interest, uncover problems, and imagine solutions.
- **Evaluate**: To evaluate existing solutions + collect feedback from potential stakeholders.

Each of the three phases (above) takes place in two settings:
Lab and *Field* (below).

1. **Lab:** Controlled settings, such as participatory workshops, phone/video interviews, etc. The purpose of the lab setting is to discuss and co-create.

2. **Field:** Uncontrolled settings situated in the community, such as in-house interviews and street intercepts. The purpose of the field setting is to observe and analyze.

LISTEN, PHASE 01: SITUATE

Whether you are new to the community or a veteran, you'll want to begin your work by situating yourself in order to best understand the context you're working within. Below, we offer a couple of options for situating within Lab and Field settings. We recommend completing at least one of these exercises from the Lab setting, and one from the Field setting before moving on to Phase 02.

Situate: Lab Setting	Situate: Field Setting
A. Interviews Recruit 5-7 interview participants to provide insights through a structured, 30 minute phone or video interview. Create and follow an interview guide of no more than 10 questions, most of which are open ended. Lead interviews with questions about the day-to-day experience as opposed to being overly direct and confrontational.	**A. Field Study (Contextual inquiry)** Conduct in-house interviews (~1 hour in length) with preselected individuals from the community. Ask individuals to walk through their daily behaviors (i.e. food prep, cooking, shopping routine, etc.). Along the way, document responses to pre-planned questions and take pictures of key behaviors, artifacts, or any other moments of interest.
B. Surveys: Create and send a 7-10 question survey to identified community members. Ensure that the survey can be easily completed within 5 to 10 minutes.	**B. Field Experience:** Create and send a 7-10 question survey to Visit the community space or location of significance to the community to get a sense for the landscape. Balance being an active participant in that space with pure observation.

Whether you are planning to conduct interviews with participants and listen in a Lab or Field setting, consider the following techniques.

What does the nonverbal language of the participant tell you?

To listen is not just to take note of what is heard, but also what is seen. Consider the following:

1. Take note of the participant's body language. What does this tell you? For example, is their jaw clenched? This could be an indication of stress. Are their eyebrows raised? This could be an indication of discomfort[2].

2. What is the participant's environment telling you?

3. What might the participant be thinking/ feeling in this moment?

What is the participant saying, and what are they actually saying?

In addition, it is the researcher's job to work with the participant in order to inspire them to share the deepest insights. Consider the following:

1. Empower your participant to be vulnerable by being vulnerable yourself. Share a personal story, be casual and friendly, show genuine interest.

2. Remember that it is often difficult for a participant to clearly express themselves. For complex questions/responses, consider using the Five Whys method developed by Sakichi Toyoda[3]. For every answer the participant gives, ask "why?" five times in order to dig deeper into the root cause of their response.

3. In addition, consider providing other ways for the participant to express themselves by introducing drawing or card sorting[4] exercises. Exercises like these provide additional stimulation to encourage deeper participation.

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[2]For further information on body language, we recommend "8 Ways to Read Someone's Body Language" by Travis Bradberry on Inc: https://www.inc.com/travis-bradberry/8-great-tricks-for-reading-peoples-body-language.html (Retrieved May, 2020).

[3]Sakichi Toyoda is the Founder of Toyota Industries. He developed the technique way back in the 1930s. The methodology is core to the company's culture, which prioritizes creating space for team members to gain a better understanding of what's actually happening in the factory. Learn more about the Five Whys on Mind Tools: https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_5W.htm (Retrieved May, 2020).

[4]Card Sorting is an exercise in which participants are given a series of cards with different words or images on them, and are asked to arrange the cards in an order that is meaningful to them. This is a technique frequently used by web designers and information architects. To learn more about the Card Sorting exercise, check out the "Usability Testing for the 1995 Sun Microsystems' Website" case study from the Nielsen Norman Group: https://www.nngroup.com/articles/usability-testing-1995-sun-microsystems-website/ (Retrieved May, 2020).

How are you documenting what you are hearing/seeing?

The method of documentation plays a significant role in the comfort level of your participant. Consider the following:

1. While convenient, large video cameras are often intimidating, even for the most outgoing participant.

2. 360 video cameras are now affordable, and are typically less intimidating, allowing for total documentation of both environments and conversations.

3. Still cameras are a great tool for capturing an environment, and portraits, but are awkward to use while interviewing. If you opt for this documentation method, consider bringing a designated photographer.

4. Audio recordings are a simple tool for revisiting an interview, but are limited in that they do not capture body language or the physical environment.

5. Notebooks are the least invasive method.

LISTEN, PHASE 02: EXPLORE

The Explore phase allows you to uncover problems, imagine solutions, and maintain what is already working, in collaboration with the community. For the Explore phase, if possible, we recommend listening to the community in the lab setting first, and then moving into the field setting. Engaging the community in both of these settings will lead to deeper results.

Evaluate: Lab Setting

A. Participatory Idea Generation Workshop

In this interactive workshop (2 hours), lead participants through a series of activities to learn from the solutions that participants create themselves. Activities include drawing exercises, journey mapping, empathy map-ping, and/or storyboarding. Details for each of these activities are provided in this toolkit. Workshops and exercises may be held in-person, or adapted to take place online. In this toolkit, we have also included logistics recommendations to consider before the workshop.

Evaluate: Field Setting

A. Guerrilla Research

After the workshop, teams can conduct quick, dirty, and effective exploratory research within the community. This is a much more spontaneous way to learn about what is important to community members, and to gain additional insight on their day-to-day lives and the task or challenge of interest. In this toolkit, we have included eight potential activities for you to explore.

Lab: Participatory Idea Generation Workshop

To begin, we'll dive into the Participatory Idea Generation Workshop[5]. To better understand any issue through the eyes of community members, this workshop approach excels at reframing the problem by prompting solutions created by the community itself. The workshop is typically two hours in length, but can be made shorter or longer depending on the time available. The workshop should include a diverse range of community members. We recommend a minimum of 5 participants.

Facilitation & Logistical Considerations:

When you arrive, arrange the room how you see fit, but be sure to allow space for each participant to be able to work through the worksheets on their own. Bring plenty of water, nametags, pens, and scrap paper for your participants. Aside from materials, you will need one lead facilitator who introduces each activity as well as a co-facilitator who monitors the room in order to provide answers to clarifying questions. In addition, it is recommended to bring a documentarian who is responsible for logging key information from the report-outs as well as to assist the lead facilitator in keeping the workshop running on time. Below are some additional recommendations that stem from our learnings.

1. Select your general community demographic. For example, in our pilot, we were seeking participants from 18+ (under 18 will result in privacy/permission issues). Beyond that, we wanted a wide range of ages, mix of genders, mix of employment.

2. Identify community partners who can assist in recruitment. You will need a trusted intermediary to act on your behalf. Their role can be recruitment only, hosting or arranging a site, participation in the workshops, and receiving final reports.

3. Know your participants language preference and respect that preference. If the audience is Spanish speaking and their preference is Spanish, conduct interviews and workshops in Spanish. If the audience is of mixed language preference, provide translation.

4. It is possible your participants will bring along children, which may increase participation rates for certain demographics. Arrange with your community partner to provide childcare services to keep the children busy and non-disruptive. Alternatively have coloring pages, quiet toys, etc.

5. Have names, contacts, phone numbers, emails, address of site and share with the entire team.

[5] Workshops like these have a long history in the design community, and were especially popular in the Scandanavian design scene in the 1960s and '70s. The purpose and ethos of a participatory design workshop is to work directly with the end users or beneficiaries of a project. Instead of assembling a group of "experts" to make decisions on behalf of community groups, participatory workshops are highly collaborative and invite the community to influence the process of developing or refining solutions that will ultimately be used by them. You may have heard of the term "human-centered design". This is a design approach and mindset that is highly connected to the principles of participatory design. For more on this and related topics, we highly recommend checking out the work of Victor Papanek, including his seminal text, *Design for the Real World*.

6. Your participants' time is valuable. Consider providing gift cards or another form of remuneration. Have an accurate count of gift cards/remuneration method and bring extras, just in case. Keep in mind that many prepaid debit cards require the release of personal information by the user and are subject to transaction fees. Ask your community partner for recommendations. Prepare simple thank you notes for all participants. Place gift cards in thank you notes. Hand out at the end of the session.

7. Arrange appropriate snacks/water to be provided. Consider using local area vendors for this, and be aware of any food sensitivities.

8. Should participants not be able to participate in-person, consider protocols for remote participation. Will doing so exclude those without access to proper technology? What can you do to equip participants with the necessary technology to accomplish the session?

Sample Workshop Agenda:

As the workshop is intended to take place over the course of 2 hours, the following is a recommended agenda, assuming a 10:00am start time. Instructions and facilitation notes for each of the following agenda items will be described in the pages and worksheets that follow.

Time	Description
10:00am – 10:10am	Instructions
10:10am – 10:15am	Worksheet 01: Draw Something
10:15am – 10:25am	Select participants "Show and Tell" from Worksheet 01
10:25am – 10:45am	Worksheets 02–03: Chart Your Journey
10:45am – 11:00am	Group Mapping Exercise inspired by Worksheet 02–03
11:00am – 11:05am	Break
11:05am – 11:15am	Worksheet 04: Empathy Map
11:15am – 11:35am	Worksheet 05: Storyboard
11:35am – 11:50am	Select participants share results of Worksheet 05
11:50am – 12:00pm	Final discussion and close

The following provides an overview of four recommended exercises to perform during your participatory ideation workshop. As each exercise is described, we will include an example to follow along with. Our example is based upon a study conducted in Salinas, CA, which ultimately led to the development of this toolkit. That study focused on gaining a better understanding of community needs pertaining to food access and insecurity. For this reason, you will notice a thematic lean toward topics that are relevant to food and shopping. These topics can be adjusted to align with any topic of interest you may have.

Task/Challenge Area: _____

TIP   This participatory workshop will specifically allow you to work with participants to better understand the process they take to accomplish a task or challenge area. For example, in our example, we will be focusing on the process of acquiring and making food. When preparing for the workshop, reflect on your research questions and determine the key task or challenge area of most interest to you. Write that down in the space provided below, and keep it handy.

Exercise 01: Draw Something

The first activity invites participants to draw something of relevance to the research topic of interest. For example, in our study on food access and insecurity, we asked participants to draw a picture of their favorite food, or the contents of their refrigerator. Participants will use the below worksheet (*Draw-Something.pdf*) to complete this exercise.

DRAW SOMETHING

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Available in Worksheets > Draw-Something.pdf

While this exercise might seem straightforward, it is important to keep in mind that many participants will lack creative confidence, and will be afraid to draw. To help ease the participants into the idea of drawing, the lead facilitator may create a drawing of their own in a very rudimentary manner in order to build confidence amongst those in the audience. It is important to leave a few minutes in this activity to allow participants to quickly share with the group. In doing so, the exercise is also able to serve as an icebreaker activity.

Exercise 02: Chart Your Journey

Next, you'll dig into the process or experience each participant faces, in relationship to the topic of study. To continue our example around food access, we might use this exercise to better understand the step-by-step process participants currently use to acquire food, or prepare a meal. To accomplish this, each participant works individually to fill out the worksheet template below.

CHART YOUR JOURNEY

Instructions:

1. Reflect on the task we are focusing on today.
2. Write down, in order, 6 steps you would typically take to accomplish that task.
3. Answer the questions for each activity in the space provided.

How does this happen, and where does it take place?	Who is involved or responsible?	How much do you like or dislike doing this?
1		1 – dislike ⟶ 5 – Like
		Fill in one circle
		◯·◯·◯·◯·◯ 1 2 3 4 5
2		Fill in one circle
		◯·◯·◯·◯·◯ 1 2 3 4 5
3		Fill in one circle
		◯·◯·◯·◯·◯ 1 2 3 4 5

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How does this happen, and where does it take place?	Who is involved or responsible?	How much do you like or dislike doing this?
4		1 – dislike ⟶ 5 – Like
		Fill in one circle
		◯·◯·◯·◯·◯ 1 2 3 4 5
5		Fill in one circle
		◯·◯·◯·◯·◯ 1 2 3 4 5
6		Fill in one circle
		◯·◯·◯·◯·◯ 1 2 3 4 5

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Available in Worksheets > Chart-Your-Journey.pdf

Exercise 02: Chart Your Journey Continued

The worksheet challenges participants to indicate, in order, six steps that they would typically take to accomplish the task you have specified. For example, a participant in our study on food access and insecurity might use the following six steps to describe the process they use to prepare a meal. **> See Tip 1**

1. Going to get food
2. Selecting what to buy
3. Purchasing food

4. Storing food
5. Preparing meals
6. Eating meals

In addition, participants are asked to consider the following for each of the six steps: **> See Tip 2**

- How does this step happen, and where does this take place?
- Who is involved or responsible for this step?
- On a scale of 1–5, with 1 being least and 5 being most, how much do you like doing this step?

TIP 1   Allowing the participants to define their own six steps will provide you with authentic insights and an ability to understand the process from their own perspective. However, for consistency-sake, you may also choose to pre-define these steps ahead of the workshop. If you do this, you'll want to modify the worksheet slightly by pre-populating each of the six blank spaces with a step you have identified.

TIP 2   Consider working with participants to uncover the specific pain points or benefits that take place along their journey.

Exercise 02: Chart Your Journey Continued

Once all participants are done populating their worksheets, the lead facilitator will hand out the Journey Map worksheet for each individual to complete. Journey Maps consist of an x-axis that represents the linear timeline of the participant's experience as well as a y-axis that plots the relative ease/complexity of the task(s). (*Journey-Map.pdf*)

Available in Worksheets > Journey-Map.pdf

TIP 1   If you chose to pre-prescribe the six steps for each participant, you can do this as a group activity at the front of the room, and disregard the *Journey-Map.pdf* worksheet. Doing this as a group is only possible if the steps are pre-determined, due to the need for the steps to be consistent. In addition, doing this as a group will require access to a whiteboard or large sheets of paper. If you have chosen to do this as a group, the lead facilitator will begin by soliciting a participant to volunteer to come to the front of the room. Together with the participant, the lead facilitator will reference their completed worksheet in order to plot the participant's answers on the pre-drawn journey map. This will serve as an example for the rest of the participants.

         Next, all remaining participants will be invited to the front of the room to plot their responses. Once all responses are plotted, the lead facilitator will provide commentary on the results. The focus of this ad hoc analysis should be on the consistent response patterns, as well as the outliers. The lead facilitator should ask for feedback and reactions from the participants throughout the analysis.
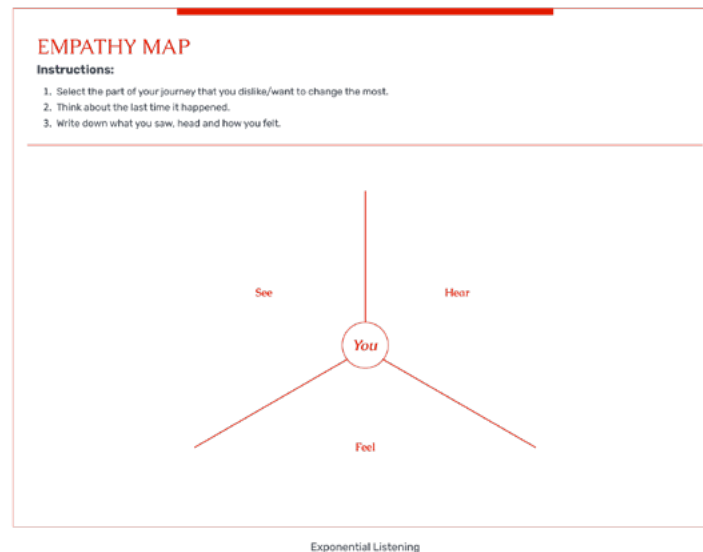
[6]Journey Maps are a very popular method used in the experience design community. All kinds of designers, like web designers, app designers, service designers, environmental designers, and product designers, use journey maps to, well, map out a journey. Journey Maps typically include a user profile that captures the goals of the user along with the scenario they are currently facing, in addition to a linear sequence of "steps" they take to respond to said scenario. Our toolkit offers a simplified version that differs in its intention to be completed by the person the study is pertaining to, not the designer. For more information about Journey Maps, check out "Journey Mapping" 101 by Nielsen Norman Group (Retrieved May, 2020): https://www.nngroup.com/articles/journey-mapping-101/

Exercise 02: Chart Your Journey Continued

Because this section is the longest and most intellectually demanding, the co-facilitator must pay special attention to the audience, and be ready to intervene quickly in order to provide clarification to one or all of the prompts. > See Tip 1

Exercise 03: Empathy Mapping

Next, participants are asked to select the point of their journey they dislike the most, and complete an empathy map inspired by that low point. The purpose of an Empathy Map[7] is to allow participants to reflect on the pain point by describing in detail their feelings, as well as what they were hearing and seeing the last time they experienced said pain point. > See Tip 2

EMPATHY MAP
Instructions:
1. Select the part of your journey that you dislike/want to change the most.
2. Think about the last time it happened.
3. Write down what you saw, head and how you felt.

See   Hear

You

Feel

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Available in Worksheets > Empathy-Map.pdf

TIP 1   Regardless of opting to do this as a group or individual exercise, this exercise will yield results that should be documented and averaged in order to understand the trends of pain points and perceived steps/actions required to complete the task of interest.

TIP 2   For the sake of time, participants do not need to share the results of this exercise with the full group, however, you may choose to have participants work collaboratively in pairs to complete the exercise and consult one another.

[7]The empathy map was originally created by Dave Gray, and has become a popular tool in the design community for developing a user persona that goes deeper into the lived experience of a stakeholder. A complete empathy map typically explores how a user is thinking and feeling, their pains and gains, and what the user is hearing, seeing, saying, and doing. As with the journey map we introduced previously, our toolkit offers a simplified version that differs in its intention to be completed by the person the study is pertaining to, not the designer.

Exercise 04: Storyboarding

The final exercise, informed by all previous activities, asks participants to invent either a new solution, or a new and improved experience, that can reduce the negative aspect(s) of their journey. The storyboard template challenges participants to articulate what happens before their idea is implemented, the experience of engaging with their solution, and the impact of the idea after it has been put into action for some time. > See Tip 1

Available in Worksheets > Tell-A-Story.pdf

To begin, the lead facilitator must demonstrate by producing a storyboard of their own in real-time in order to help bring clarity to the exercise. As participants work on their storyboards, the co-facilitator will be available for clarification and creative encouragement. At the end of the exercise, a selection of the participants will share their solution with the group in order to close out the day. > See Tip 2

TIP 1   If time allows, participants can be encouraged to consider the benefits of their solution through three common design lenses: functional, emotional, and sensorial.

TIP 2   Prior to ending the meeting, consider asking the participants to remove their name tags, and stick them onto their packet of worksheets before turning them in (or to write their contact information on the packet if they would like to be kept in the loop). This will be helpful for any potential follow up or documentation to share back with the participants. Inviting the participants to stay involved will allow you to increase the accountability of your end results, and ensure you are building something relevant with the community.

Field: Guerrilla Research

It is important to balance the setting of a controlled workshop environment with a range of design-driven research approaches in more spontaneous environments in order to capture insights from the community that are as honest and holistic as possible.

Leverage the results and inspiration of the anchoring workshop to conduct at least one of the following methodologies.

A. Coffee Shop Intervention

Stand in line at a local coffee house, and offer to buy the person in front of you or behind you a cup of coffee in exchange for participating in a survey/study. This catches people off guard and allows for more authenticity than someone who is more prepared.

B. Reenactment

Put yourself in the shoes of a local. Attempt to find a place to eat healthy, exercise, and more (specific actions dependent on goals in specific communities). Take a journal of your experience. Was it hard? Was it easy?

C. Day in the Life

Sit down on a bench with a sheet of paper, and a series of colorful markers. Invite participants to choose any color they like, and draw a day in their life. As they draw, or after they draw, ask them to explain the drawing to you.

D. Listening Booth

Set up a table in an open setting with a sign that invites people to come and talk. The sign should include a prompt that is very specific and slightly whimsical/comedic in order to attract participation. For example: "Talk to me about your favorite food." "Talk to me about fun things." "Talk to me about your day."

E. Insight Wall

Install a chalkboard wall or poster board with a prompt at the top (for example: "What I Love About My Community Is _____", "Today I Ate _____ for Breakfast", etc.). Have writing instruments available, and pre-populate the wall with a number of generic responses to inspire participation.

F. Insight Floor

While the Insight Wall is a successful methodology for reaching both adults and children, for studies focused on the health and wellbeing of kids, create a similar installation on the floor.

G. Eavesdropping

Sit in a public space, and listen. What are people talking about? What are people doing? What are they laughing at? What is the space like? Do this in multiple spaces.

H. Diary Study

Recruit identified 'extreme-users' to keep a diary for two to three weeks. Participants will be asked to document their personal experiences as they relate to AHA's topic of interest. Entries will be captured in a private online blog for later review by an AHA team.

LISTEN, PHASE 03: EVALUATE

While Explore allows teams to imagine solutions collaboratively with a group of participants in a workshop or out on the field with little-to-no preconceived notions, Evaluate is most useful for capturing feedback on concepts that have already been developed. These may be ideas generated during the Participatory Idea Generation workshop, or internally at another stage of the research process.

For the Evaluate phase, if possible, we recommend listening to the community in the lab setting first, and then moving into the field setting. Engaging the community in both of these settings will lead to deeper results.

Explore: Lab Setting	Explore: Field Setting
A. Participatory Feedback Session The facilitators will lead an individual or small group of participants through a series of activities in order to collect feedback on any work or ideas produced. Activities include re-introducing empathy mapping, dot voting, and directive feedback.	**A. Guerrilla Research** Spontaneous tactics can also be used for evaluating existing materials, programs, or ideas. These often require a more active role, at least in setting them up. However there are some passive examples as well. Our toolkit includes both, with activities including street intercepts, live prototyping, urban interventions, and visual voting mechanisms.

Lab: Participatory Feedback Session

The Participatory Feedback Session is designed to be done in a 1:1 setting, or with a small group of individuals. The session may take anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour, depending on the availability of your participant(s), and the depth of conversation. Here are some things to consider as you prepare for the feedback session:

1. The session's focus is to evaluate. As a result, the session will require more context and information at the beginning of the meeting (in comparison to the explore segment). Be prepared to share the ideas in a clear and concise manner, and justify your ideas by explaining the research that led you to them.

2. To help you better collect feedback on an existing idea in a controlled setting, we have included three suggested activities (on the next page). Leverage up to 2 of these methods over the course of the session. Allow roughly 20 minutes for each.

Lab: Participatory Feedback Session Continued

A. Empathy Map

A documentation tool for facilitators and participants to record what stakeholders "see", "hear", and "feel" so that they can interpret and empathize with the end user. In the context of a Participant Feedback Workshop, the facilitator will use the empathy map worksheet in order to understand the participant's response to the program from multiple perspectives.

To complete the Empathy Map, you can use the same worksheet from the Explore phase. It is available in:

Worksheets > *Empathy-Map.pdf*

B. Dot Voting

A simple, democratic facilitation method to build consensus and gain buy-in amongst a diverse group of participants. To conduct a dot voting exercise, the facilitator will need stickers in a range of colors. Participants are typically given 2-3 stickers in order to vote on a series of ideas. If the participant feels strongly about a single idea, they may opt to use all of their stickers on one concept. At the end of a dot voting exercise, the facilitator will moderate a discussion with the group about the results.

> See Tip 1

E. Directive Feedback

A process for structuring and capturing stakeholder feedback on existing solutions or ideas to guide further developments and improvements. The specific questions for a directive feedback session will differ depending on the scope of the program or initiative, but may include prompts such as:

- "What I like most about _____ is _____."

- "If I could change one thing about _____, it would be to _____."

- "I would/would not use _____, because _____."

- "Have you thought of _____?"

Prompts like these provide the audience with a set of statements to provide critical feedback in a less awkward and intimidating manner. Similarly, many design schools and practitioners use the "I Like, I Wish, What if" method[8].

In addition, participants can rank the benefits of each idea on a scale of, for example, "life changing" to "nice-to-have" to "unnecessary" (or "irrelevant").

TIP 1   This activity is typically best done with a group of 3-5 people, but in theory can still work in a 1:1 setting.

[8]The Stanford D School published the I Like, I Wish, What if method, noting that "feedback is best given with I-statements". The program alludes to the fact that leading with an I-statement can be much less aggressive and intimidating or personal than leading with "you". For more on this method, check out the D School's method: http://dschool-old.stanford.edu/wp-content/themes/dschool/method-cards/i-like-i-wish-what-if.pdf (Retrieved May, 2020).

Field: Evaluative Guerrilla Research

It is always important to pair a more formal session with "guerilla" research. This is because participants in a controlled setting can occasionally perform the responses they think the researcher wants to hear due to nerves or a general sense of intimidation. Leverage the results and inspiration of the evaluative session to conduct at least one of the following research methods.

A. Street Intercepts

Walk around the center of the town, and strike conversation with as many people as possible. Maintain a consistent interview guide in order to get multiple perspectives on similar prompts. Interview guide TBD based on the community and material to be evaluated.

B. Urban Interventions

The act of placing unique/out-of-context artifacts or verbiage in the public space in order to inspire people to stop and think/interact. Keep notes of key observations and interactions.

C. Live Prototyping

Bring a rough prototype (e.g. sketch, storyboard, cardboard model, etc.) to the street. Share the prototype with passersby and share extra materials with them so that they can build upon your idea.

D. Visual Voting Mechanism

This methodology allows for the capturing of data in a public and visual manner. For example, have a bin full of red balls, and two clear buckets. On the floor, you'd have a prompt, and on each bucket, you would have one of two potential responses to the prompt. Community members contribute by moving the ball to the appropriate bin. This can also be accomplished with buildings that have multiple doorways - using the doorway as the prompt for answering a question or stating a belief.

REFLECT

The Reflect phase allows you to make sense of what you've heard, ensure you've interpreted or processed the information accurately, determine if you've received sufficient answers to your questions, and share the results with your organization.

First, Synthesize

Collect and review all of the results from the Listen section (including Situate, Explore, and Evaluate), and distill key insights as they relate to your study. Remember that, as much as we hope our research can be linear and simple, the reality is research can be incredibly non-linear and complex. Do not rush through this process.

- If there are still research questions left to be addressed go back to the Listen phase.

- If you have new questions, add them in the Question phase.

Use the template below, and work from left to right to document your research and make sense of it. When sharing, consider the implications as the message, the interpretations as your understanding, and the observations as your evidence.

Observations:
What did I hear/see?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Interpretations:
What might it mean?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Implications:
Why does it matter?

_____

_____

_____

_____

In addition, we highly recommend the practice of learning-through-making. As you reflect on the observations, interpretations, and implications, do not be afraid to turn to sketching or visualization as a means of communicating your insights. Present results to team members and community members to build buy-in and represent what matters most from what you found.

LEARN

Exponential Listening is made possible by having an empathetic understanding of others, and a willingness to collaborate and suspend bias, to improve how programs and services are made. When we "complete" our research is when the work really begins. Now is the time to put newly gained understanding into action. You must always remember that the process is iterative.

Qualitative work is directive, not definitive	Research is an ethical practice
Having in-depth conversations with community members is tremendously valuable for understanding their unique cares and concerns. However, this should not replace or be replaced by quantitative research methods.	Always make sure to respect, compensate, and follow up with research participants as necessary. Their time, stories, and experiences are invaluable. Honor them by putting those hard earned insights to good use.

Everything you learn can be helpful

Many research projects result in additional insights. Make sure to document these somewhere. You never know when they might be helpful.

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

Exponential Listening was inspired by an earlier collaboration between the American Heart Association and verynice, and has been used by and with communities across the globe to put listening at the center of innovation. In the spirit of listening, if you have any comments, suggestions, or questions, we want to hear from you! Email info@verynice.co, and we'll get back to you as soon as we can.

Thank you for reading the Exponential Listening *toolkit!*